

Carterville Fishery Resource Office

Interests, Experience, and Opportunities

Introduction

Established in the early 1970's as the Central States Fishery Station (Princeton, Indiana), the Carterville Fishery Resources Office (CFRO) was renamed and relocated to Crab Orchard National Wildlife Refuge in southern Illinois in 1981. In the early years, our emphasis was on managing sport fish on National Wildlife Refuges and other federally owned lands throughout the lower Midwest. As the vision of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (Service) Fisheries Program has shifted to include other important aspects of aquatic resource conservation, so has CFRO. In addition to sport fish management, we now work on aquatic habitat restoration, aquatic nuisance species prevention and management, interjurisdictional fishery management, and native fish restoration. Carterville FRO currently serves Illinois, Indiana, and Ohio within the Mississippi River and Ohio River basins with two fishery biologists/project managers, a term fishery biologist, intermittent biotechnicians, and an administrative technician.

Strategic Planning

We are currently developing a strategic plan and process to provide clear focus and direction for CFRO, to prioritize potential projects/actions, and to make sure that our efforts are making progress toward achieving our objectives. The foundation of the plan is the priority areas recently identified in the Service's "Fisheries Program Vision for the Future" (Partnerships and Accountability, Aquatic Species Conservation and Management, Public Use, Cooperation with Native Americans, Leadership in Science and Technology, Aquatic Habitat Conservation and Management, and Workforce Management). Within those areas, particular emphasis will be placed on habitat conservation and restoration, aquatic nuisance species prevention and management, interjurisdictional and native fisheries conservation, and sport fish management.

In developing the strategic plan, we will identify and prioritize goals, develop SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound) objectives for high priority goals, develop strategies and actions for the SMART objectives, rank and prioritize those actions, and incorporate high priority actions into an annual work plan. As important new opportunities arise they will be incorporated into the strategic plan as new objectives, strategies, or actions. This process will allow us to effectively develop a realistic strategic plan that will not encompass all of the challenges that face us but will be effective in directing our work. This will ensure that the projects we take on are the most important to achieving our goals and will allow us to measure our progress toward achieving our objectives.

Past and Current Activity Highlights

Interjurisdictional Fisheries: CFRO operates the Mississippi Interstate Cooperative Resource Association (MICRA) paddlefish coded-wire tag reading center and participates in managing the MICRA paddlefish database. In addition, we participate on the Middle Mississippi River Basin Pallid Sturgeon Recovery Work Group, assist in

reintroducing shovelnose sturgeon into parts of the Ohio River Basin, and have taken part in recovery activities for pallid sturgeon.

Aquatic Habitat: CFRO recently completed a three-year, USACE-funded study to evaluate the effects of dredged material placement on fish communities in the Mississippi and Illinois rivers and is currently conducting the age and growth component of study to evaluate the Swan Lake Habitat Rehabilitation and Enhancement Project. We participate on the Ohio River Main Stem Studies Environmental Team and the Upper Mississippi River Conservation Committee. CFRO has also funded habitat restoration projects on Mingo National Wildlife Refuge (Missouri) and Big Rock Creek (Illinois) through the Service's Fish Passage Program.

Aquatic Nuisance Species (ANS): CFRO currently chairs the ANS Task Force Asian Carp Work Group that is developing a National Asian Carp Management and Control Plan. In addition, we have begun collecting data on habitat use by Asian carp in parts of the Middle Mississippi River.

Sport Fish: CFRO cooperatively manages sport fish on the Crab Orchard NWR, Scott Air Force Base, and Crane Naval Weapons Support Center. We also provide technical assistance to other national wildlife refuges.

Additional Experience/Expertise: CFRO staff also have experience in the following: field study design and data analysis (e.g., used a combination of diversity measures and before/after control/impact analysis to simplify the results of the dredged material placement study), adaptive management (e.g., worked with the Grand Canyon Adaptive Management Program, Upper Colorado River Endangered Fish Recovery Program, Recovery Implementation Plan Scientific Work Group), and database creation and management (e.g., created databases to manage information on several hundred thousand fish).

Opportunities

Consider the Cartersville Fishery Resources Office door open. This document is just the first of many opportunities for us to interact. Our goal is effective and productive partnerships that lead to a better understanding and thus better conservation of our Nation's resources. Once our strategic plan is developed, we will have identified priority actions for priority objectives under priority goals and will actively pursue opportunities to complete those actions. We foresee several opportunities to work with our partners on the Mississippi, Illinois, and Ohio watersheds.

We are very interested in your perspective on where our office can best complement new and ongoing conservation efforts. Any general or specific suggestions for our office or for myself as a new Project Leader in the area, are greatly appreciated.

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Philosophy

The following “philosophy” will guide the development of our strategic plan as well as our day to day activities.

The future of the resources we manage lies in the knowledge and attitude of the public. We will work with today's youth, communities, leaders, and lawmakers to foster an understanding of the importance of conservation and proper management of aquatic resources. The future also lies in the resources that exist today. “An ounce of conservation is worth a pound of restoration.”

Because the natural world is immensely complex, we will focus our efforts in order to more fully develop our expertise and understanding and thus increase our effectiveness. At the same time, we will maintain a lower level of involvement in a variety of areas to enable us to relate our work to other disciplines.

We will tackle each problem head on without limiting ourselves based on jurisdictions, politics, or traditions. We will be cognizant of all, but will not let them be roadblocks to our success, rather opportunities for collaboration and creativity. We will use all disciplines necessary to fully address issues by building a diverse network of partners. Our work will not stop at the shoreline but will extend into the surrounding watersheds.

Our office owns no land and has limited regulatory responsibility, thus, people will work with us because they want to, not because they must. We will strive to be easy to work with and effective in getting projects done and done well.

Everything we do will “move the needle.” Given the magnitude of the problem and the limited resources to address them, everything we do will be closely scrutinized to help make sure that we are making a measurable difference for the resource (or “moving the needle” as Jim Martin, Pure Fishing, would say). We acknowledge the enormity of the problem facing resource managers without being fully able to define it. However, we will know we are focused in the most important areas because of the thoughtful deliberation that will go into our Strategic Plan. We will know we are doing the most important projects in those areas because they are the highest priorities based on our ranking process. We will know we are doing well on each project because of the Operational Plan that is developed, reviewed, and guides each of our projects.

Finally, we will let the world know of our successes and failures so that information can be shared and the work we do can help bring more attention and energy to the resources.